Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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They've Seen the Light

"I just don't understand you black people. And I don't understand the black press."

Marsha McGee, GM press officer

It's So-o-o Nineties!

Welcome to the NPWF

Founded in 1971, the Women's Legal Defense Fund was an early, outspoken leader of the feminist movement. It campaigned for sexual harassment laws, pressed for affirmative action, and fought for abortion rights. But these days the Fund is busy repackaging itself. Like much of the feminist movement and liberal America in general, it craves "credibility" and shuns anything politically disturbing or hard-edged.

In an operation coordinated by pollsters and PR specialists, the group has now reinvented itself with a new, more wholesome name: the National Partnership for Women and Families. The politically neutered nature of the new organization was on display at its annual luncheon earlier this month, when executives from General Motors and People Magazine—both major donors to the Partnership—were invited to address the crowd. In short, the blanding of the Women's Legal Defense Fund is a parable of Clinton time.

Not that the old Fund was by any means a radical organization. Its officers included (and still do) corporate lobbyists such as Nikki Heidepriem, who represents Monsanto and American Home Products, high-powered attorneys like Sara-Ann Determan, and Democratic Party operatives such as Ellen Malcolm of Emily's List, the political action committee that raises money for women candidates. Also on board is Melissa Moss, a former fund-raiser for the Democratic National Committee and veteran of Ron Brown's Commerce Department. Moss supervised the selection of corporate executives for Brown's notorious international trade junkets.

About a year ago, the group sniffed the winds of change and made haste to commission pollsters to conduct a series of focus groups. The term "legal defense fund", the pollsters determined, was too confrontational. Out it went. Fund leaders actually considered striking the word "women" from its name as well, but in a gust of courage decided to keep it in. The new and improved National Partnership for Women and Families was born.

The Fund's–er, the Partnership's – mission statement was also given a subtle makeover. The old organization fought "for policies that help women meet the dual demands of work and family, achieve economic security, and gain access to affordable, quality health care". The Partnership "uses public education and advocacy to promote fairness in the workplace, quality health care, and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family". Focus group input also helped the Partnership devise a spiffy new logo and motto: "A voice for fairness, source for solutions, and force for change."

The Partnership's agenda, too, was set by polling, in this case conducted by Democratic pollster Celinda Lake. She found that health care and family leave tested "better than mom and apple pie", so those issues were put at the forefront of the organization's agenda.

Furthermore, the Partnership prudently determined that it should try harder to form alliances with the private sector. Such alliances are apparently based on cash contributions, raised - just like in the political world - by offering an array of perks to big donors. Trustees of the Partnership, a category for $10;000 to $100,000 donors, get invita-

(**"NPWF"**, *continued on page 6)*

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Our Little Secret

New York City 10021

More than $2 billion in campaign contributions poured through Washington during the 1996 presidential and congressional elections, a figure that exceeds the GNP of some of the world's smaller nations. Yet those who do the giving represent a tiny strata of the public. One zip code on New York's fashionable Upper East Side (10021) provides more campaign cash than each of 24 states.

The biggest source of lucre for politicians comes from individual donors of $200 and up.. A new study conducted at the University of Akron reveals that the richest 10 percent of the population make 81 percent of all campaign donations. About 90 percent of big donors are white, 80 percent male and a strong majority are self-described conservatives or moderates.

Big donors support free trade but oppose national health care, cutting the defense budget and spending for anti-poverty programs. More than half favor tax cuts even if that will mean less social spending, while just one-third of the general public endorses that statement.

Editors
Ken Silverstein
Alexander Cockburn

Co-writer
Jeffrey St. Clair

Design
Deborah Thomas

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

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CounterPunch
P.O. Box 18675
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-986-3665 (phone)
202-986-0974 (fax)

The Ethical Latham

Each day yields its ripe crop of absurdities on MSNBC. One particularly delicious spectacle that met our bleary gaze in mid-June was attorney Weldon Latham expatiating on Ken Starr's ethical breaches in his career as independent counsel. Latham, you will recall, is Jesse Jackson's selected "independent investigator" into GM's treatment of its minority dealers. Latham turned out to be an employee of GM, paid a reported $1.5 million to issue a report on the matter. The review proved palatable to America's number one industrial corporation. One particularly glorious moment in Latham's ethical pirouettes in this function came when he tried to persuade Charles Bell of Tuskegee, Alabama, who had won a $17 million judgment against GM, to settle the case for a cool $1 or $2 million, fire his lawyers and not even pay them.

The richest 10 percent of the population make 81 percent of all campaign donations.

Dirtiest Spy Tricks

The dirtiest secrets of South Africa's apartheid regime are now spilling out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town. It's a pity that the chilling stories haven't been made much of a ripple here in the United States, whose own intelligence agencies have, down the years, traveled along the same path and possibly offered useful signposts to their South African colleagues.

Back in 1997 a South African agent admitted to smuggling drugs to raise money for terror schemes including chemical experimentation on blacks. He said he had done this on behalf of the Directorate of Covert Collections, a super-secret unit within South Africa's military intelligence apparatus. The drugs — Ecstasy and Mandrax — were manufactured in labs run by Dr Wouter Basson, one of the chieftains of South Africa's chemical and biological weapons program. Basson was arrested in 1997.

Last week's hearings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered vivid insights of what went at Roodeplaat Research Laboratory, a military installation near Pretoria, where Basson (a cardiologist by profession, who numbered former president PW Botha among his patients) oversaw production of infamous materials. A veterinarian, Dr Schalk van Rensberg, testified that "The most frequent instruction" from Basson was for development of a compound that would kill but make the cause of death seemingly natural. "That was the chief aim of the Roodeplaat Research Laboratory."

The Laboratory manufactured cholera organisms, anthrax to be deposited on the gummed flaps of envelopes and in cigarettes and chocolate, walking sticks firing fatal darts that would feel to the doomed victims like bee-stings. Van Rensberg took his riveted audience painstakingly through what he called "the murder lists" of toxins and delivery systems. These included 32 bottles of cholera which, one of the lab's technicians, Mike Odendaal, testified, would be most effectively used in the water supply.

There were plans to slip the still imprisoned Nelson Mandela covert doses of the heavy metal poison, thallium, designed to make his brain function become "impaired, progressively", as Van Rensberg put it.

In one case lethal toxins went from Roodeplaat to a death squad detailed by the apartheid regime to kill one of its opponents, the Reverend Frank Chikane. The killers planted lethal chemicals in five pairs of his underpants, expecting him to travel to Namibia, where they reckoned there would be "very little forensic capability." Instead Chikane went to the United States where doctors identified the toxins and saved his life.

The big dream at Roodeplaat was to develop race-specific bio-chemical weapons, targeting blacks. Van Rensberg was ordered by Basson to develop a vaccine to make blacks infertile. He told the Truth Commission that this was the major project assigned to him by Basson. There were plans to distribute infected

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T-shirts in the black townships to spread disease and infertility.

Americans need not entertain any feelings of moral superiority. Back in 1960, in the course of one of the Agency's frequent attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, the CIA planned to put thallium salts in Castro's shoes and on his night-table when he was visiting New York to address the United Nations. The scheme collapsed only at the last moment.

Years later, a CIA-supplied team tried to assassinate Nicaragua's foreign minister, Miguel d'Escoto, by giving him a bottle of Benedictine, laced with thallium. (Illustrating the like-mindness of government assassins everywhere, Saddam Hussein's secret police also tried to assassinate one of its prime foes with thallium.)

Race specific onslaughts were made by US army researchers into bio-chemical warfare in the 1950s. In the early 1990s it was reported that psychiatrists at the National Institute for Mental Health were testing new medications to try to correct what they supposed to be chemical imbalances allegedly found in both violent monkeys and men. This disclosure came shortly after government psychiatrist Fred Goodwin created an uproar by comparing violent inner-city youths with "hyper-aggressive monkeys". Goodwin was duly installed as the boss of NIMH.

One of the investigators for the South African Truth Commission, Zhensile Kholsan, has said that there is a strong suggestion that, in the words of one South African press report in the Johannesburg Sunday Times, "drugs were fed into communities that were political centers, to cause socio-economic chaos". Black communities in the United States have expressed similar suspicions, particularly about the arrival of crack in South-Central Los Angeles in the early 1980s, imported by CIA-sponsored Nicaraguans raising money for arms. On March 16 of this year CIA Inspector General Fred Hitz finally conceded to a US Congressional committee that the Agency had worked with drug traffickers and had obtained a waiver from the Justice Department in 1982(the beginning of the Contra funding crisis) allowing it not to report drug trafficking by its assets.

Back in the 1950s CIA researchers were investigating the consequences of putting LSD and other chemicals in reservoirs. Was the lethal arsenal deployed at Roodeplaat assembled with useful advice from the CIA and other US agencies? There were most certainly close contacts down the decades. It was a tip from CIA officer Donald Rickard that led the South African secret police to arrest Nelson Mandela. Another Truth Commission here wouldn't do any harm. In fact we should have it in permanent session.

PROFS FOR SALE

Microsoft's marketing booklets for colleges contain a quote from CEO Bill Gates saying that the company "strongly believes that the single most important use of information technology is to improve education". Of course, the single most important use of information technology, for Microsoft anyway, is to make money. One way it does so, as reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education, is to offer bounties to professors that tout Microsoft profits.

The killers planted lethal chemicals in five pairs of Rev. Frank Chikane's underpants.

The bounty is offered on a Web page for the "Academic Cooperative", a Microsoft program for computer-science professors. To get the reward —$200 - the professor need only mention Microsoft's products in a scholarly presentation. Microsoft offers the same fee to academics that simply use its products. The Chronicle interviewed a few professors who've taken money from the company. All said that they thanked Microsoft for its support during their presentations, but did not say anything about taking the $200.

One recipient of Microsoft cash, George Whitson of the University of Texas at Tyler, defended the program by calling it "more open and honest" than other perks that companies provide to professors - not a statement that heightens confidence in the independence of the professorial class.

Whitson went on to ask, "Does anyone seriously think that a researcher would compromise his integrity for $200?" We do, especially if you're looking at $200 a pop.

TIMBER-R-R

Remember Mark Rey? No? Well, for more than a decade he was the timber industry's top lobbyist. When the Republicans seized control of Capital Hill, Rey was rewarded with the crucial position of chief of staff to the senate committees overseeing the Forest Service. He duly plotted mayhem on nature.

Rey's replacement as chief lobbyist for the $75 million a year American Forest and Paper Association is Doug Crandall, a former exec with Brand S Lumber in Livingstone, Montana. In mid-June Crandall was scooped up by the House Natural Resources Committee and given the key staff position for the subcommittee that controls the national forests.

U.C. UPDATE

The University of California's first post-affirmative action admission figures were bad (as reported here, "Student Radicals Against UC.") New statistics on actual enrollment are even worse. According to the University's data, released May 20, the number of black, chicano, latino and indian students intending to enter UC Berkeley this September will be half what it was last year: 776 enrolled in 1997. 376 have said they'll register this coming fall. An error in transcription in a May issue fouled up the admissions info. It should have read: fewer than one hundred African Americans out of an admitted pool of roughly 8,000 were expected to enroll.

Now that the composition of the '98 class is clear, it turns out that Chancellor Berdahl's much ballyhooed efforts at "outreach" to underrepresented candidates achieved nothing. The yield is exactly what many feared. Freshman blacks will have to concentrate to find each other. The class of 3,660 students will include at most ninety-eight blacks and fourteen indians — barely enough to fill a lecture hall.

THE TWO M'S

Alas, no winners in our quiz. The first quote was from H.L. Mencken, the second from Karl Marx. ■

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It's A Money/Class Thing, Of Course

Why the Drug War Works

It's not often that one sees Charles "Bell Curve" Murray and Prof. Cornel West holding hands, nor Ahmet Ertegun and Reagan's secretary of state, George Schultz, but there they all were along with hundreds of others from the U.S. and around the world, signing a double-page ad that ran in The New York Times on June 8, under the banner headline "We believe the global war on drugs is now causing more harm than drug abuse itself."

Among the names were Lyndon Johnson's attorney general, Nicholas Katzenbach; former New York police commissioner, Patrick Murphy; San Francisco D.A. Terrence Hallinan; plenty of all the usual liberal suspects and such well known conservative members of the "legalize drugs" crowd as Milton Friedman. The ad was timed to coincide with the big United Nations special session on drugs, which ran from June 8-10. The text of the ad stated baldly that the drug war has been a disaster and the time has come for a "truly open and honest dialogue regarding the future of drug control policies(one in which fear, prejudice and punitive prohibitions yield to common sense, science, public health and human rights."

The statements to which the signatories put their names are mostly unimpeachable common sense, as in "drug war politics impede public health efforts to stem the spread of HIV, hepatitis and other infectious diseases. Human rights are violated, environmental assaults perpetrated and prisons inundated with hundreds of thousands of drug law violators." All true, and every phrase repeated, proven and doubly proven year after year.

So why does the drug war grind on, decade after decade, immune to reason, often grotesque in its hypocrisy? How can one listen without laughing to the solemn posturing of the U.S. government about the recent sting on Mexican banks for their washing of drug money, without a word about corresponding drug money-washing by U.S. banks? Small wonder Mexican politicians deride the Clinton administration for its double standard. Furthermore, many of the political veterans now putting their names to the big appeal to reason in the Times ad espoused, in their careers in government, exactly the policies they now denounce. George Schultz, for example, sat in the State Department during all the years when Reagan's drug war was in full swing, while simultaneously turning an amazingly blind eye to the Contra-drug arms-shuttling overseen by the CIA. Another signatory, Lloyd Cutler, was White House counsel in the Carter administration, just at the moment it was giving the go-ahead to the CIA to pour arms and money into the hands of drug-trafficking Afghan mujahiddeen.

In other words, as so often in such appeals signed by government veterans now returned to private life, there is a state agenda that, when they are servants of the state, they all find themselves following. It's just like former chiefs of the armed forces who retire into private life and denounce nuclear weapons. Nice, but a bit late in the day.

> "We were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets."

In all its hypocrisy and cruelty the drug war drags on because, aside from enriching political and criminal elites, it serves an important repressive function that no state is eager to abandon. If its real, as opposed to its proclaimed purpose is recognized, the drug war "works." And that purpose has never been the halting of production, shipment and consumption of drugs. Take a look at the history of drug wars over the past 150 years. These drug wars are either openly avowed or tacit enterprises that expand the drug trade, or they are pretexts for social and political repression. Or both.

In the mid-19th Century the British fought two drug wars to force the Chinese to accept imports of opium from India. Nearly a century and a half later, as it contemplated intervention against the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan, the Carter administration initiated the spending of covert billions on what was, if we view it realistically, another drug war, as one of President Jimmy Carter's own advisers predicted. As he later recalled, David Musto, a White House member of the president's council on drug abuse, told his bosses that "we were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets." Covert U.S. military aid soared and so did Afghan opium production, tripling between 1979 and 1982. By 1982, on UN and DEA figures, the Afghan heroin producers, romanticized by U.S. politicians and press alike as "freedom fighters", had captured 60 percent of the heroin market in Western Europe and the U.S. The heroin producers had of course the all-important asset of being anti-Communist.

All the millions sent by the U.S. to Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico allegedly to battle drug lords have never made a dent in the drug trade. But they have helped Latin American armies and police crushing peasant insurgencies and murdering labor organizers. The true political priorities were graphically underlined by the CIA's Inspector General Fred Hitz, who disclosed to the U.S. Congress on March 16 of this year that in 1982 the Agency extracted from Reagan's Attorney General William French Smith clearance that the CIA would not have to report any knowledge it might have of drug-dealing by CIA assets. This clearance was only fully rescinded in 1995.

Domestically, the "drug war" has always been a pretext for social control, going back to the racist application of drug laws against Chinese laborers in the recession of the 1870s when these workers were viewed as competition for the dwindling number of jobs available. The main users, middle-class white men and women taking opium in liquid form as "tonics," weren't harassed. By 1887 the Chinese Exclusion Act allowed Chinese opium addicts to be arrested and deported. In the 1930s the racist head of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Harry Anslinger, was renaming hemp as "marijuana" to associate it with Mexican laborers and claiming that marijuana "can arouse in blacks and Hispanics a state of menacing fury or homicidal attack." By the 1950s Anslinger had pushed through the first mandatory drug sentences.

As so often, Nixon was helpfully explicit in his private remarks. H.R. Haldeman recorded in his diary a briefing by the president in 1969, prior to launching of the war on drugs: "[Nixon] empha-

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sized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to."

So what was "the system" duly devised? On June 19, 1986, University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias died from an overdose of cocaine. As Dan Baum put it in his excellent Smoke and Mirrors, The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure, "In life, Len Bias was a terrific basket ballplayer. In death he became the Archduke Ferdinand of the Total War on Drugs." It was falsely reported that Bias had smoked crack cocaine the night before his death. In fact he had used powder cocaine and there was no clear link between this use and the failure of his heart, according to the coroner. Bias had signed with the Boston Celtics and amid Boston's rage and grief Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, a Boston rep, rushed into action. In early July he convened a meeting of the Democratic Party leadership: "Write me some goddamn legislation," he ordered. "All anybody in Boston is talking about is Len Bias. They want blood. If we move fast enough we can get out in front of the White House." In fact the White House was moving pretty fast. Among other things the DEA had been instructed to allow ABC News to accompany it on raids against crack houses. "Crack is the hottest combat-reporting story to come along since the end of the Vietnam war," the head of the New York office of the DEA exulted.

All this fed into congressional frenzy to write tougher laws. South Carolina Rebpublican Thomas Arnett proclaimed that "drugs are a threat worse than nuclear warfare or any chemical warfare waged on any battlefield."

The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act was duly passed. It contained 29 new minimum mandatory sentences. Up until that time in the history of the Republic there had been only 56 mandatory minimum sentences. The new law had a death penalty provision for drug "king pins" and prohibited parole for even minor possession offenses. But the chief focus of the bill was crack cocaine. Congress established a 100-to-1 sentencing ratio between possession of crack and powder cocaine. Under this provision possession of five grams of crack carries a minimum five-year federal prison sentence. The same mandatory minimum is not reached for any amount of powder cocaine under 500 grams. This sentencing disproportion was based on faulty testimony that crack was 50 times as addictive as powdered coke. Congress then doubled this ratio as a so-called "violence penalty."

There is no inherent difference in the drugs, as Clinton drug czar Barry McCaffery has conceded. The federal Sentencing Commission, established by Congress to review sentencing guidelines, found that so-called "crack violence" is attributable to the drug trade and has more to do with the setting in which crack is sold. Crack is sold on the street and powder cocaine is vended by house calls. As Nixon and Haldeman would have approvingly noted about the new drug law, it was transparently aimed at blacks, and is reminiscent of the early targeting of Chinese smoking opium rather than white ladies sipping away at their laudanum.

In 1995 the U.S. Sentencing Commission reviewed eight years of application of this provision and found it to be undeniably racist in practice. In 1994 for example, 84 percent of those convicted in federal courts of crack possession were black, while only 10 percent were white and 5 percent Hispanic. The disparity for crack trafficking prosecutions was even wider: 88 percent blacks, 7 percent Hispanic, 4 percent white. By comparison, defendants convicted for powder cocaine possession were 58 percent white, 26 percent black and 15 percent Hispanic. In Los Angeles in 1991 all 24 federal defendants in crack cases were black. The Sentencing Commission recommended to Congress and the Clinton administration that the ratio should be 1-1 between crack and powder cocaine, arguing that federal law allows for other factors to be considered by judges in lengthening sentences (such as whether violence was associated with the offense). But for the first time in its history, Congress rejected the Sentencing Commission's recommendation and retained the 100-to-1 ratio. Clinton likewise declined the advice of his drug czar and his attorney general and signed the bill.

> Domestically, the drug war has always been a pretext for social control.

One need only look at the racial make-up of federal prisons to the consequences of the 1986 drug law. In 1983 the total number incarcerated in federal state and local prisons and jails, was 660,800. Of those 57,975 (8.8 percent) were incarcerated for drug-related offenses. In 1993 the total prisoner population was 1,408,685 of which 353,564 (25.1 percent) were inside for drug offenses.

The Sentencing Project, a DC watchdog group, found that the increase was far from racially balanced. Between 1986 and 1991 the incarceration rate for whites convicted on drug crimes increased by 106 percent. But the number of black males in prison for kindred offenses soared by a factor of 429 percent, and the rate for black women went up by 828 percent. The queen of the drug war, Nancy Reagan, said amid one of her innumerable sermons on the issue, "If you're a casual drug user, you're an accomplice to murder."

So, to call for a "truly open and honest dialogue" about drug policy, as all those distinguished signatories in the advertisement requested, is about as realistic as asking the U.S. government to nationalize the oil industry or to require the top 10 U.S. banks to plow all their profits into urban revival. Essentially, the drug war is a war on the poor and the dangerous classes, here and elsewhere. How many governments are going to give up on that? ■

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("NPWF", *continued from p. 1)*
tions to organization strategy sessions, "special recognition in National Partnership publications", and invitations to participate in conference calls with staff.

The shiny new Partnership was unveiled to its members on June 10, at the organization's annual luncheon in Washington, DC. The affair, held at the Hilton Hotel near Dupont Circle, was paid for with private contributions. The biggest donors were drawn from Corporate America: General Motors, Sara Lee, People Magazine, Time Warner, Wyeth-Ayerst, Monsanto, Texaco, Procter & Gamble, Dow Chemical, to name only a few. This no doubt explains why the two outside speakers invited to address the crowd were executives from General Motors - the No. 1 donor, though no figure was provided — and People — tied for second.

On their chairs, guests found a bag of goodies distributed by People. Inside was a CD of love songs from men to women (including Hank Williams's "Hey, Good Lookin'") and a Slim-Fast bar. "What could possibly be more misogynistic than trying to convince women that they have to be thin," an irked lunch guest told us. A good point, but since Slim-Fast was another major funder of the luncheon it was surely entitled to favorable product placement.

The goodie bag contained a copy of the current issue of Teen People, featuring Leonardo DiCaprio on the cover, and with no less than ten pages worth of material on matinee idol. In one moment of particularly searing self-scrutiny, Leonardo was quoted as saying that he wanted to be remembered for his work, "rather than being sort of the hunk of the month."

The magazine offered a detailed astrological chart for Leonardo. It seems that the wretched youth is being pulled in opposite directions by "Jupiter, the party planet [and] the more serious effects of Saturn". Teen People also offered beauty tips from a number of Hollywood starlets, including Kate Winslet, Leonardo's co-star in Titanic.

As Fernando Lamas used to say, "It's not how you feel, it's how you look".

For luncheon guests, the difficult choice was to flip through Teen People or following the remarks of the day's speakers. Several Partnership bigwigs addressed the crowd, and then General Motors CEO John Smith made his way to the podium. Smith offered up a curious account of the history of modern feminism. According to the auto magnate, the whole movement emerged thanks to (yes, you've probably guessed by now) the automobile. Back in the 1950s, women were isolated in the distant suburbs while their menfolk went off to work in the family's sole car. So, Smith continued, the two-car family broke female isolation and was a necessary step in the liberation of women.

The keynote, the inspirational speech of the year for the Partnership's members, was delivered by Ann Moore, the president of People magazine. Moore — who is also a higher-up at Sports Illustrated, which every year publishes that icon of feminist literature, the swimsuit issue — congratulated the Partnership on its image enhancement program. Groups must be responsive to their audience, she said. That philosophy, she concluded, is the driving force of People, which exists to give the people what they want.

So move over Emma Goldman, Rosa Luxemburg, Shulamith Firestone, Juliet Mitchell. Those days are gone. Put those old books by Mary Wollestonecraft back on the shelf. Welcome to People magazine, manifesto of the new Women's Movement. As Fernando Lamas — played by Bill Murray on Saturday Night Live - used to say, "It's not how you feel. It's how you look."

The National Partnership's recruiting poster? How about Emma Goldman in a Caprice, after an airbrush makeover. ■

Whiteout, At Last

At long last! CounterPunchers who plonked down their dollars in keen anticipation of Cockburn and St. Clair's *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press* may rest assured that the manuscript is at the printers and copies expected in mid to late July. This book, so meaty in fact and analysis that it has been shifted from paperback to hardback by Verso, is now available only to CounterPunchers for $18, postage included. Over 400 pages of what is the best single book to read if you want an intro to the Agency since the dark day of its birth.

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